



<u>Committee and Date</u>
COUNCIL
24 February 2011

<u>Item</u>
<b>3</b>
Public

## MINUTES

OF

MEETING OF SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL

HELD ON 13 JANUARY 2011  
AT 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

Mr P Adams  
Mrs B J Baker  
Mr T Barker  
Mrs J B Barrow  
Mr K R Barrow  
Mr T Bebb  
Mr M Bennett  
Mr W Benyon  
Mr T H Biggins  
Ms K Burgoyne  
Mr V Bushell JP  
Mr G Butler  
Mrs A J Caesar-Homden  
Mrs K D Calder  
Mr S Charmley  
Mrs A M Chebsey  
Mr J E Clarke  
Mr G L Dakin  
Mr S Davenport  
Mr A B Davies  
Mr T Davies  
Mrs P A Dee  
Mr D W Evans

Mr R A Evans  
Mr E J Everall  
Mr J A Gibson  
Mr J B Gillow OBE  
Mr N J Hartin  
Mrs E A Hartley  
Mr R Hughes  
Mr V J Hunt  
Mr J Hurst-Knight  
Dr J E Jones  
Mrs J Jones  
Mr S P A Jones  
Mr J M W Kenny  
Mrs H M Kidd  
Mr C J Lea  
Mr D G Lloyd MBE  
Mr C J Mellings  
Mr D J Minnery  
Mr A N Mosley  
Mrs C M A Motley  
Mrs M Mullock  
Mrs E M Nicholls  
Mr P A Nutting

Mr M J Owen JP  
Mr W M Parr  
Mrs E A Parsons  
Mr M G Pate  
Mr P F Phillips  
Mr M T Price  
Mr D L Roberts  
Mr K Roberts  
Mrs D M Shingleton  
Mr J Tandy  
Mr M Taylor-Smith  
Mrs R Taylor-Smith  
Mr R Tindall  
Mr G F Tonkinson  
Mr A E Walpole  
Mrs C Wild  
Mr B B Williams RD  
Mr M Williams  
Mrs T Woodward  
Mr L Winwood  
Mr M L Wood  
M P A D Wynn

## 121. APOLOGIES

The Chief Executive reported apologies for absence had been received from Mr A Durnell, Mr R Huffer, Mrs T Huffer, Mr S J West and Mr M Whiteman OBE.

## 122. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of interest were made by the following members:

- (a) Mr C J Mellings declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 9 (Draft Medium Term Financial Plan 2011/2012 to 2013/2014) because of his wife's employment with the Council.
- (b) Mrs B J Baker declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 9 because of her husband's employment with the Council.
- (c) Mrs P A Dee declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 9 because her husband was a member of the Shropshire Council Pension Fund.
- (d) Mrs C Wild declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 9 because her partner was an employee of Shropshire Council.
- (e) Mr K Roberts declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 9 because of his wife's employment with Shropshire Council.

## 123. MINUTES

### RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2011 be approved and confirmed as a correct record, subject to the following:-

- (a) The seconder in Minute 116 (Street Trading – Delegation of Powers to Town Councils being amended from Mr M Taylor-Smith to Mrs R Taylor-Smith; and
- (b) The inclusion in Minute 120 (Planning Appeal – Energy from Waste Facility, Battlefield, Shrewsbury) recording that Mr R Evans voted against the decision.

## 124. ANNOUNCEMENTS

### (a) Chairman's Engagements

The Chairman referred to the list of official engagements carried out by himself and the Speaker and Vice-Chairman since the last meeting on 9 December 2010, which had been circulated at the meeting.

### (b) New Year's Honours List 2011

The Speaker reported that the following Shropshire residents had been awarded honours in the Queen's New Year's Honours List and advised that he would write to each one to congratulate them on their achievement.

Commanders of the Order of the British Empire (CBE)

- **Roger Leslie Wilson** – Founder, Sarcoma UK Charity. For services to health care.

Members of the Order of the British Empire (MBE)

- **Bronwen Evans** - For services to the Minsterley and District Eisteddford and to the community in Minsterley, Shropshire.
- **Jean Jarvis** -Chief Executive, South Shropshire Furniture Scheme. For services to social enterprise.
- **Keith Robert Mansell** - For services to Gliding.
- **Kathleen May White** - For services to the Post Office and the community in Claverley, Shropshire.

Officers of the Order of the British Empire (OBE)

- **Paul Francis Harris** - Operations Director of Makita Manufacturing Europe Ltd. For Services to International Trade.

Companion of the Order of the Bath

- **Carolyn Downs** - former Chief Executive of Shropshire County Council and now Chief Executive of the Legal Services Commission. For her work for central and local government.

(c) **Cutting Carbon Emissions**

The Speaker announced that the Council had received an award from the Carbon Trust in recognition and appreciation of its work in cutting carbon emissions. The Chairman presented the award to the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Carbon Reduction and Energy Efficiency, Mrs Ann Hartley.

(d) **Presentation of Reorganisation of Hospital Services**

The Speaker reported that a presentation would be made by the Chief Executive of the Royal Shrewsbury and Princess Royal Hospital Trust to all members on 17 January 2011 in the Council Chamber commencing at 5.00 p.m.

## 125. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Speaker announced that Mr D Baker, Ms R Huffer and Mrs J Carroll had given notice of their intention to ask questions in accordance with Procedural Rule 14.

- (a) Mr D Baker asked the following question of the Leader:

Legislation demands that our policies have an Equalities Impact Needs Assessment for those with Protected Characteristics.

These classes include:

- Race;
- Sex (gender);

- Sexuality;
- Age;
- Disability;
- Gender reassignment;
- Religion and Belief; and
- Pregnancy and Maternity.

Please can you tell us for each of these groups, which residents and reference groups have been consulted, i.e. have had the budget papers sent to them for comments on the impact on their own groups. Would you also inform Council as to where this evidence, i.e. their responses - can be viewed?

Mr K Barrow replied as follows:

Shropshire Council routinely assesses the impacts for all residents where service changes are required. In response to the savings targets agreed by Cabinet (most recently 22 December 2010), savings proposals were identified by Chief Officers and discussed with Cabinet Members. These proposals were set out in the Cabinet Reports of 15 September, 11 November and 22 December 2010 and all of these reports are publicly available.

Earlier public consultation was carried out in Summer 2010, when Shropshire Council alongside other partner organisations, asked the public what its priorities were and how it would like to see Shropshire Council focussing spend. These results guided some of the earlier budget work ahead of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review on 20 October 2010.

However deep the cuts were going to be, the priority has always been to minimise the impact on front line services. Where budget savings have required changes to service delivery, the impact of these savings has been considered in terms of the effect on different groups.

The report to Cabinet on 22/12/10 para 17-19 indicated, that the overall cumulative impacts of the savings proposals were not found to have a disproportionate impact across any one group of people. Equality Impact Needs Assessments (ENIAs) have been produced for all services impacted by the budget cuts. The specific service review consultation is referenced in these EINAs. All EINAs are available to be viewed in the Members' Library.

- (b) Ms R Huffer asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Rural Affairs:

Please would you tell me how you have assessed – as per your portfolio responsibilities – the impact, differential, negative or positive, of budget proposals on the rural area? Whom have you consulted, where can we see this consultation, where does the balance of differential lie?

Mrs C Motley replied as follows:

Shropshire Council routinely assesses the impacts for all residents where service changes are required. In response to the savings targets agreed by Cabinet (most recently 22 December 2010), savings proposals were identified by Chief Officers and discussed with Cabinet Members. These proposals

were set out in the Cabinet Reports of 15 September, 11 November and 22 December 2010 and all of these reports are publicly available.

The Rural Policy Officer has supported Development Services, Children & Young People's Services and Community Services in assessing the impact of their budget saving implications on rural communities. Rurality considerations have been included in the Equality Impacts Needs Assessments (EINAs).

Performance & Strategy Scrutiny Committee considered the impact of the budget savings in terms of Equalities at its meeting of 7 January 2011. Where service changes impact directly on service user groups, detailed consultation is underway to consider the alternative provision that can be provided to meet the individual need. In some cases the new provision is an enhancement on the previous service provided. This consultation will continue to take place until the service changes are complete. EINAs have been produced for all services impacted by the budget cuts.

The report to Cabinet on 22/12/10 para 17-19 indicated, that the overall impacts of the savings proposals were not found to have a disproportionate impact across any one group of people.

- (c) Mrs J Carroll asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Transport and IT Services:

Will Shropshire Council as a matter of urgency draw up a policy for dealing with town and parish councils which treats these councils with respect and understanding.

The way town and parish councils have been treated with regard to public toilets is disgraceful and should never be repeated.

Everyone realises that Shropshire Council has to cut costs and most of us welcome the decentralising of power and control. However this has to be properly planned and done in consultation with the lower tier councils. Town and parish councils vary considerably in their size, resources and capabilities. Proper discussions with them could result in solutions to problems without creating hostility and bad feeling.

Shropshire Council's handling of the public toilets issue has brought that council into disrepute with the lower tier councils and the electorate.

To announce public toilets must be taken over or closed within a few weeks of town and parish councils having to set their 2011/12 precept without any prior discussion was ridiculous. Lower tier councils had no time to consult their electorates, adjust their budgets or consider alternative solutions. The 10 per cent transition money offered was totally inadequate to give any chance of a proper transition period. And all the toilet running costs were estimated! Town and parish councils left reeling from this bombshell are wondering what else is in the pipeline. What other services Shropshire Council is suddenly going to "dump" on them.

All this could have been avoided and should be avoided in the future. Town and parish councils need proper, meaningful discussions with officers, financial provision for transition periods and time to adjust their budgets and talk to their parishioners.

Public toilets are a valuable facility for visitors to Shropshire, as well as residents. In high value tourism areas, such as the South Shropshire Hills, the lack of these facilities could badly affect tourism development – a key strand of Shropshire Council's economic policy.

Costs for running Bishop's Castle auction yard toilets seem ludicrously high – electricity and water costs much higher than those for a normal household and 75 % higher than costs for running our own Town Hall toilets. We need time to cut these costs to a more acceptable level.

Mr Taylor-Smith replied as follows:

In response to the question submitted regarding the transfer of public conveniences, information has been sent to all relevant town and parish councils regarding this issue. Letters were sent informing of the possibility that public conveniences could be closed and that town and parish councils may wish to consider taking responsibility for future operations. These letters were sent out from late September 2010. Since this period numerous letters have been sent out to inform town and parish councils of the issues and criteria being considered. This culminated in the latest correspondence from Shropshire Council immediately after the Christmas break to confirm the position, following Cabinet's decision to close these facilities.

It should also be noted that Shropshire Council is not just negotiating on the transfer of the service and thus imposing higher costs for towns and parishes without regard. As part of the negotiations (as outlined in previous correspondence) the transfer of the asset (i.e. the toilet block) will occur, this is a significant capital asset at no charge. Modest refurbishment will occur, all required building inspections will be undertaken prior to transfer, discussions regarding the transfer of revenue are being undertaken to ease the transition, and town and parish councils will also be able to charge for use of the facility and thus generate an income. Shropshire Council is also open to adopting some of the town and parish's other assets to further assist. This is subject to reasonable criteria. Thus the "offer" to towns and parishes is a reasonable offer for a service that has no statutory requirement.

Officers are in active discussions with town and parish clerks (these have been occurring before the Christmas break) and are ongoing. Officers have also been presenting information at meetings of town and parish councils throughout the autumn. These discussions are ongoing too. In parallel, letters have also been sent to all town and parish councils advising of the need for them to engage in the process.

Financial information has been prepared and sent out as a guide for town and parish councils. Thus operational costs, NNDR valuations, have been sent out in a budget format to assist in local decision making. Additionally, estimated levels of income (income estimated @0.20p per user) have been prepared, to provide an overview of the possible levels of income that could be generated.

For clarification, officers are in correspondence and discussion with Bishop's Castle Town Council and the Town Council has submitted a financial proposal for consideration by officers. To assist the transfer, these discussions are ongoing, meetings arranged and the issues will be discussed

by the Town Council shortly. For information, the Town Council already has responsibility for the operation of a public convenience within the town.

With regard to individual costs, it is stressed that these costs are constructed to meet the current operational needs of the facilities as operated by Shropshire Council. If facilities are devolved, then town and parish councils will be in a position to determine local operational needs and adjust the service as appropriate. This would allow the current costs to be modified to suit local need and local use. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to assume local provision could reduce costs.

### Summary

Correspondence, information and meetings are being held to assist with this issue and Shropshire Council is making a reasonable offer with the package that has been put forward to towns and parishes. Shropshire Council accepts that the closure of public conveniences is not desirable. However the current financial climate has required all services to consider their operational costs. Hence the closure of the public conveniences has been approved, but with a view to assisting towns and parishes to take responsibility for this service, with a reasonable package being offered.

By way of supplementary question, Mrs Carroll asked why parish and town councils had been given insufficient time to properly consider the possible transfer of public toilets from the unitary council and asked why the extremely high staff recharge costs had never been previously examined.

In reply, Mr Taylor-Smith explained that all parish and town councils had been given the same amount of time to consider whether to accept the offer of transfer of the public toilets. The budget cycle was the same for every council and some had agreed to accept and include the cost in their precept while others had not. The point relating to the cost of the recharge was well made which was why the Council was looking for a cheaper acceptable option and he would be meeting with Bishops Castle's officers shortly to discuss all available options.

## **126. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

- (a) Mrs E A Parsons asked the following question:

Would the Portfolio Holder please advise Council of what progress has been made towards the promised improvements to access for the disabled and those with mobility problems across the Frankwell Footbridge in Shrewsbury?

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning, Mr M Taylor-Smith replied:

The current financial situation as resulted in the Council's capital programme having to be reviewed. Decisions on a revised, prioritised and affordable capital programme will be made by Council at its meeting in February 2011, as part of its budget setting process.

By way of a supplementary question Mrs E A Parsons asked:

Is the Portfolio Holder aware that this item should be viewed as a high priority as it caused significant difficulties to those persons with mobility problems?

By way of a supplementary answer, Mr M Taylor-Smith replied:

Yes, we are aware that it is a high priority scheme, however there are also other high priority member schemes in the capital programme. As part of the review we are trying to take a judgement on the schemes in the programme and where we can afford to spend money.

## **127. REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL**

It was proposed by the Leader, Mr K R Barrow and seconded by Mrs E A Hartley that the report, a copy of which is attached to signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

In proposing the recommendations, the Leader moved the following amendments to Recommendations (a) and (n):

(a) That the Basic Allowance payable to all Unitary Councillors be reduced by 5% with effect from 1 April 2011;

and

(n) That the mileage rate paid to all elected member for "Approved Duties" be set at 40p per mile with effect from 1 April 2011.

The Leader explained the process by which the Panel had undertaken its work, including the 50% public service discount which had been taken into account when setting the original recommendation of the Basic Allowance. He thanked the Panel for the work they had undertaken but said that in such difficult economic times when cuts were being made to services and staff, members could not be seen to be immune from the effects of the spending reduction. He advised that should the Council support the amendment to reduce the Basic Allowance, this would have a knock on effect to the Special Responsibility Allowances because of the multiplier used to calculate these payments.

Several members expressed concern at the prospect of a reduction in the Basic Allowance pointing to the fact that some people had actually given up paid work to serve their communities effectively. Others asked whether the 5% reduction would actually result in any post being re-created.

A number of members queried the policy referred to in paragraph 5.7 of the Panel's report regarding allowances for committee vice-chairmen. They suggested that these posts were now more than a training opportunity and the policy should be reconsidered when the Panel undertook its next review.

Replying, the Leader reminded the Council that politicians both local and national were held in low regard by the public. He accepted that the principle concern of all councillors was to serve their local communities. The proposed reduction was appropriate because it would save jobs, as opposed to individual posts and was the correct thing to do in the current circumstances. And, in addition, he would be asking



the officers to investigate the possible reduction in the Council's membership for the future.

15 members requested a recorded vote, the outcome of which was as follows:

For the amendment proposition:

Mr P Adams, Mrs B J Baker, Mr T Barker, Mrs J B Barrow, Mr K R Barrow, Mr T Bebb, Mr M Bennett, Mr W Benyon, Mr T H Biggins, Mrs K Burgoyne, Mr V Bushell, Mr G H L Butler, Mrs K D Calder, Mrs A Caesar-Homden, Mr S F Charmley, Mrs A M Chebsey, Mr J E Clarke, Mr G L Dakin, Mr S Davenport, Mr A B Davies, Mr T Davies, Mrs P A Dee, Mr D W Evans, Mr R A Evans, Mr E J Everall, Mr J A Gibson, Mr J B Gillow, Mr N J Hartin, Mrs E A Hartley, Mr V J Hunt, Mr J Hurst-Knight, Dr J E Jones, Mrs J Jones, Mr S P A Jones, Mr J M W Kenny, Mrs H M Kidd, Mrs C J Lea, Mr D G Lloyd, Mr C J Mellings, Mr D J Minnery, Mr A N Mosley, Mrs C M A Motley, Mrs M Mullock, Mrs E M Nicholls, Mr P A Nutting, Mr M J Owen, Mr W M Parr, Mrs E A Parsons, Mr M G Pate, Mr M T Price, Mr D W L Roberts, Mrs D M Shingleton, Mr J Tandy, Mr M Taylor-Smith, Mrs R Taylor-Smith, Mr R Tindall, Mr G F Tonkinson, Mr A E Walpole, Mrs C Wild, Mr B B Williams, Mr M Williams, Mr L Winwood, Mr M Wood, Mrs T Winwood and Mr P A D Wynn.

Against the motion:

None.

Abstaining from voting:

Mr P F Phillips.

The motion was carried, with 65 members voting in favour, none against and with 1 abstention.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the Basic Allowance payable to all Unitary Councillors be reduced by 5% with effect from 1 April 2011;
- (b) All Special Responsibility Allowances are based on multiples of the Basic Allowance and indexed to the NJC staff Annual Salary Award;
- (c) No member receives more than one Special Responsibility Allowance;
- (d) The Special Responsibility Allowance of the Leader of the Council be 2.0 x the Basic Allowance;
- (e) The Special Responsibility Allowance for the Deputy Leader be 1.25 x the Basic Allowance;
- (f) That the Special Responsibility Allowances for the remaining seven Cabinet Portfolio Holders, and also the five Scrutiny Committee Chairs, be 1.0 x the Basic Allowance;

- (g) The Special Responsibility Allowance for the Speaker and the Chairman of the Council, and also for the Chairmen of the Strategic and Area Planning Committees, be 0.75 x the Basic Allowance;
- (h) The Special Responsibility Allowance for the Chairs of the Strategic and Area Licensing Committees/Licensing Sub-Committee be 0.25 x the Basic Allowance;
- (i) The Special Responsibility Allowance for Political Group Leaders (where the Group has a membership which is at least equivalent to 10% of the total membership of the Council (7 members) be 0.5 x the Basic Allowance, assuming that they are not already in receipt of a greater allowance;
- (j) A Special Responsibility Allowance for the Chairs of the Audit and Pensions Committee be 0.25 x the Basic Allowance;
- (k) A Special Responsibility Allowance for the Member Champions be 0.125 x the Basic Allowance;
- (l) Special Responsibility Allowances of 0.25 and 0.125 x the Basic Allowance, respectively, be set for the Independent Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee;
- (m) There be no designated Opposition Leader's Allowance;
- (n) That the mileage rate paid to all elected member for "Approved Duties" be set at 40p per mile with effect from 1 April 2011.
- (o) The maximum allowance for overnight stays in London, to include bed, breakfast and evening meal, be as stated in paragraph 5.31 and 5.32 of the Panel's Report, but that steps be taken to reduce this amount where possible; and
- (p) The allowances for overnight stays in the provinces, travel by bus, train, bicycle and taxi, as well as subsistence arrangements, remain unchanged and indexed to the NJC staff rates.

## **128. BUDGET SCRUTINY – RESPONSE OF THE PERFORMANCE AND STRATEGY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

It was proposed by Mr T Barker and seconded by Mr R Tindall that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendation contained therein, be received and agreed.

Several members, including Mr N J Hartin, Mrs H M Kidd and Mr R A Evans commented to the effect that it was inappropriate for the Council to be increasing the level of balances when also making serious cuts in services. They considered that the scrutiny process had not worked particularly well this year and arrangements should be reviewed by the Scrutiny Chairs' Group so that improvements could be brought forward for future years. Their particular criticisms were centred on the inability of non-executive members to participate in consideration of the options in a

holistic way, the lack of information presented to all members which prevented a comprehensive understanding of the effect that the budget cuts would have on particular groups within the community and the lack of time members had been given to scrutinise the proposals when they were presented.

Mr A N Mosley shared these concerns, particularly with regard to the lack of time given to the scrutiny of service reductions. He added that he was dreading the effect that the cuts would have on the vulnerable and needy members of the community which were based on a political philosophy that he did not share.

A number of other members, including Mrs T Winwood and Mr B B Williams supported the proposed contribution to the Council's reserves.

The Leader of the Council accepted that the scale of the cuts was serious and unpalatable but were necessary because of the former Government's overspending. He believed that the Scrutiny Committees had done a good job in difficult circumstances.

Replying, Mr Barker explained that the consequential process of dealing with the spending reductions during the current year had been unusual but necessary. This had lessened the opportunity for members to have a comprehensive prospective as matters progressed but there had been no alternative on this occasion. Nevertheless, he was committed to ensuring that the process of budget scrutiny was effective and further thought would be given to this matter at the forthcoming meeting of the Scrutiny Chairs' Group.

**RESOLVED:**

That the comments made by the Performance and Strategy Scrutiny Committee be taken into account during the Council's deliberations on the Draft Medium Term Financial Plan.

**129. DRAFT MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2011/2011 TO 2013/2014**

It was proposed by the Leader, Mr K R Barrow and seconded by Mr B B Williams that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein be received and agreed.

The Leader explained that the report provided a framework for considering the Council's budget position for the next three financial years and sought agreement for a list of further proposals to reduce spending in particular areas. It took account of the draft funding settlement for Local Government but as the final settlement would not be received before the end of January 2011, the final position could require changes to be made.

The report focused on the principle objective of producing a balanced budget for 2011/2012 by linking together savings identified in previous reports, including increased fees and charges and changes to the Council's capital programme. This would provide resources for the transformation of service delivery as well as the need for an appropriate level of general reserves. The second element of the plan was the production for further spending reductions in 2012/2013 and 2013/2014 amounting to £38 million. There was no doubt that the process and the reductions would be

painful but in years to come he believed that people would consider it a beneficial process.

The Leader concluded by inviting Council to add the following to the recommendations:

- (e) That £1 million be added to the Base Budget for severe weather from 2011/2012 onwards, reducing the proposed allocation of additional funding to general reserves to £963,000.

The Speaker ruled that all five recommendations would be voted on collectively, rather than separately as was suggested by Mr P F Phillips.

Mr Phillips acknowledged that the Council was now working in difficult times and wished the Leader well when arguing Shropshire's case with Government. However, during the development of the current budget there had been few chances to debate the scale, pace or impact of service reductions as there was no overall perspective of their impact on particular groups or individuals with the community.

This lack of vital information meant that it was impossible to assess the cumulative effect of service reductions being made by the Council, its partners and other public bodies. Consequently, there had been no serious protests from those affected because of the lack of information and detail for members to consider. Consequently, he would vote against the proposals.

He was supported in this view by a number of other members including Mr N J Hartin, Mrs H M Kidd and Mr R A Evans who criticised the inadequate scrutiny of the current year's proposals, adding that they wished to know the impact of the service reductions on their own electors which had been sought but not provided.

Other members, including Mr A N Mosley, Mrs E A Parsons and Dr J E Jones stated that they could not support the proposals because they did not share the political philosophy upon which they were based. Further, the effect of these proposals would make Shropshire less safe, less caring and less beautiful.

Speaking against these proposals, Mrs E A Parsons registered her concerns about the disposal of the extra sensory vehicle which had been presented to the Council by a charity in 2002. She considered this to be a very poor outcome, despite the chequered history of the vehicle because the Council had given a commitment at the time that it had received the gift. Further, any monies saved as a result of this change should have been ring-fenced to the service users of the vehicle and she asked for a commitment to this effect.

Mrs Parsons also referred to the proposed savings in recovery services which she considered would be devastating for the users which she considered to be crucial to the very vulnerable and disadvantaged people who would be affected and she asked whether some alternative saving might be found.

Replying, Mr S P A Jones explained that the multi-sensory vehicle had a chequered history but it had been agreed by the Charitable Trust that it had now reached the end of its useful life. The savings shown were the running costs and additional replacement facilities for the users would be provided at the Council's day centres. The multi-sensory vehicle had provided a valuable service but it was not felt that things could be done differently and cheaper in future.

Mr M Bennett reminded members that the Council had to produce a balance budget for 2011/2012 and there was still some uncertainty about the level of Government grant. He had yet to hear any constructive proposals from the opposition who appeared to be taking the easy option of complaining that the process used was flawed.

Replying, the Leader stated that he had no doubt that the public was fully aware of the implications and that the need for cuts was Labour's legacy after 13 years in Government. The Administration was attempting to deal with the problems appropriately and needed to make substantial savings in the coming year in order to present a lawful and balanced budget.

15 members demanded a recorded vote when the voting was as follows:

For the motion:

Mr P Adams, Mr T Baker, Mrs J B Barrow, Mr K R Barrow, Mr T Bebb, Mr M Bennett, Mr W Benyon, Mr T H Biggins, Mrs K Burgoyne, Mr G H L Butler, Mrs K D Calder, Mrs A Caesar-Homden, Mr S F Charmley, Mr G L Dakin, Mr S Davenport, Mr A B Davies, Mr D W Evans, Mr E J Everall, Mr J A Gibson, Mr J B Gillow, Mrs E A Hartley, Mr V J Hunt, Mr J Hurst-Knight, Mrs J Jones, Mr S P A Jones, Mr C L Lea, Mr D G Lloyd, Mr D J Minnery, Mrs C M A Motley, Mrs M Mullock, Mr M J Owen, Mr W M Parr, Mr M G Pate, Mr M T Price, Mr K Roberts, Mr M Taylor-Smith, Mrs M Taylor-Smith, Mr R Tindall, Mr G F Tonkinson, Mr A E Walpole, Mrs C Wild, Mr B B Williams, Mr L Winwood, Mr M Wood, Mrs T Woodward, Mr P A D Wynn.

Against the motion:

Mrs B J Baker, Mr V Bushell, Mrs A M Chebsey, Mr J E Clarke, Mr T Davies, Mrs P A Dee, Mr R A Evans, Mr N J Hartin, Dr J E Jones, Mr J M W Kenny, Mrs H M Kidd, Mr C J Mellings, Mr A N Mosley, Mrs E M Nicholls, Mrs E A Parsons, Mr P F Phillips, Mrs D M Shingleton, Mr J Tandy and Mr M Williams.

The motion was declared carried with 46 members voting in favour to 19 against.,

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the additional information about the Council's future funding, as set out in the draft funding settlement, be noted.
- (b) That the additional budget pressures identified, and which need to be included in the Council's revised savings target, be noted.
- (c) That the changes in the Council's planning assumptions about future spending requirements be noted.
- (d) That the proposed further spending cuts, as listed in Appendices 2-5, in order to produce a balanced budget for 2011/2012, be approved.
- (e) That £1m be added to the Base Budget for severe weather from 2012/2012 onwards, reducing the proposed allocation of additional funding to general reserves to £963,000.

### **130. LICENSING COMMITTEE STRUCTURES**

It was proposed by Mrs C M A Motley and seconded by Mrs R Taylor-Smith that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes, and the recommendations contained therein be received and agreed.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That with effect from the next annual meeting:

- (a) The Strategic Licensing Committee be increased in number from 11 to 15 seats and reflect the political balance of the Council.
- (b) The three Area Licensing and Safety Committees be dissolved.
- (c) That the Constitution be amended to transfer the existing responsibilities of the Area Licensing and Safety Committees to the Strategic Licensing Committee.
- (d) The Strategic Licensing Committee be invited to establish a standing Licensing and Safety Sub-Committee of five members drawn from the Strategic Licensing Committee who do not have a prejudicial interest in the subject matter and who do not represent one of the parties or the electoral division affected. The Sub-Committee would discharge those licensing and safety functions which are not reserved to the Council or within the remit of the Strategic Licensing Committee, other than those under the Licensing Act 2003 and the Gambling Act 2005.
- (e) The Strategic Licensing Committee shall establish Licensing Act Sub-Committees which shall meet as and when required to discharge the Council's duties under the Licensing Act 2003 and the Gambling Act 2005. These Sub-Committees will consist of three members drawn from the Strategic Licensing Committee and who do not have prejudicial interest in the subject matter and who do not represent one of the parties or the electoral division affected. Members will be appointed in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

### **131. REPORT OF THE MEMBERS' SERVICES TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

It was proposed by Mrs T Woodward and seconded by the Leader that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

Mrs Woodward thanked the other members of the Task and Finish Group for their assistance in bringing forward a number of important improvements, including the monthly Members' Bulletin, the consultation portal and the publication of the weekly list of meetings, all of which had improved the current range of services available to members.

Mr P F Phillips, in thanking the Chairman of the Task and Finish Group for the work undertaken on the Local Members' Protocol, asked whether it would be possible for members to be given the same guaranteed response times available to the public.

Dr J E Jones referred to the elected member role description attached at Appendix 5 to the report. She acknowledged that the role of non-executive members would change and new skills would be required to cope with the expanded community leadership role which was envisaged. She expressed disappointment therefore that the Local Joint Committee budgets had been halved, as, in her opinion, these offered the best opportunity to practice these skills.

A number of members welcomed the report and expressed their satisfaction with the monthly bulletins and helpful weekly meetings schedule. Mr N J Hartin asked with regard to the purchase of the SEE Skills Portal Assessment tool would be used.

Replying, Mrs Woodward thanked members for their positive reaction to the work of the Task and Finish Group and advised that the application of the Member Assessment tool would be considered further by the Impact Group and presented to members in due course.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) The revised member role description and list of essential skills as set out in Appendix 5 be approved, as a working document subject to regular review and revision in the light of experience;
- (b) The purchase of the SEE Skills Portal Member Assessment Tool (see para 5.4 below) be approved;
- (c) The provision of appropriate facilities for members at the local HQ buildings be investigated, but no changes be made until the Area Directors take up their new offices;
- (d) Dependent on (c) above, the provision of additional administrative support to members in their frontline role being provided locally be considered, subject to cost considerations;
- (e) A revised internal telephone directory be provided for all members as soon as is practicable;
- (f) The list of key officer contacts be updated and circulated to all members as soon as is practicable;
- (g) Letterheads and accessible templates be provided to all members on request;
- (h) Diary management be provided through Members' Services for all members, on request;
- (i) The Members' 'freefone' facility be discontinued due to very limited use;
- (j) The provision of more cost-effective arrangement for booking members' travel and overnight accommodation be investigated as a matter of urgency;
- (k) The production of a pocket Council diary be discontinued, but a weekly meetings schedule be sent to all members electronically, in its place;

- (l) The quality of the information contained in the Councillors' Corner section of the Council's intranet, and the training given to Members on its use, be improved;
- (m) The monthly information bulletins be continued and circulated to all members electronically;
- (n) The value of the Local Member Protocol be re-affirmed to all senior staff, and appropriate steps be taken to familiarise all members and senior officers with its contents, once the changes to Senior Management have been completed;
- (o) The functionality of the Council's electronic diary be improved, so as to enable members to import dates directly into their personal Lotus Notes diaries;
- (p) The current meetings schedule, which is spread over the five working days of the week, be maintained; and
- (q) The member development framework, consisting of five key development programmes of:-
  - focused local learning;
  - overview and scrutiny framework;
  - essential development programme;
  - What's New briefings programme; and
  - Specific individual development needs

be approved and the focused learning programme be implemented as a prototype in the south eastern part of the Council's area, with effect from 25 January 2011.

## **132. APPOINTMENTS**

### **RESOLVED:**

That Mrs P Mullock and Mr M Bennett be appointed as replacements for Mr A B Davies as the Council's Champion for Older People and as a member of the Shropshire Fire Authority, respectively.

## **133. REPORT OF THE WEST MERCIA POLICE AUTHORITY**

### **RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.



**134. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**

**RESOLVED:**

That, in accordance with the provisions of Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 and paragraph 10.4 of the Council's Access to Information Rules, the public and press be excluded during consideration of the following item.

**135. EXEMPT MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:**

That the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2010, as circulated to each member of the Council, be approved and signed as a correct record.

Speaker .....

Dated .....

(The meeting closed at 12.40 p.m.)